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*THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF
MODERN POETRY*

ROBERT
GRAVES

*LONDON: ERNEST BENN LTD.
8, BOUVERIE STREET, E.C. 4*

The Augustan Books of Poetry
Edited by Edward Thompson

Uniform with this volume

ROBERT BRIDGES
EDMUND BLUNDEN
RABINDRANATH TAGORE
RUPERT BROOKE
HILAIRE BELLOC
JOHN KEATS
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
G. K. CHESTERTON
WILLIAM BLAKE
JOHN DAVIDSON
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JOHN FREEMAN
ROBERT GRAVES
ANDREW MARVELL
OMAR KHAYYAM (EDWARD FITZGERALD)
W. H. DAVIES
WILLIAM CANTON
JOHN DRINKWATER
A CHRISTMAS ANTHOLOGY
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

ROBERT GRAVES

Born 1895; fourth son of A. P. Graves, author of "Father O'Flynn," and other well-known Irish songs; educated at Charterhouse School and St. John's College, Oxford; served in the War in France as a captain in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, in which regiment Siegfried Sassoon also commanded a company; was badly wounded on the Somme. The poems here selected keep a strict chronological order.

Acknowledgments are due to Messrs. Heinemann and Secker, to the Poetry Bookshop, to the Hogarth and Fleuron Presses, and to Messrs. J. B. Pinker and Son, the poet's agents.

A reviewer in the "Spectator," in a friendly notice of the first numbers of this series, observed that the selection was evidently to be from "what Mr. Robert Graves calls the right wing of English poetry." Well, here is the heresiarch himself; and with him earlier "left-wingers," William Blake, and John Davidson, the greatest of "the dead who died before the dawn." Not that the distinction of "left wing" and "right wing" is of primary importance. Mr. Edmund Blunden is commonly classified as a right-winger, while Mr. Humbert Wolfe, I understand, considers himself a left-winger; no doubt the distinction marks a difference, but it is less than the resemblance which springs from the fact that they are both admirable poets.

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In the Wilderness

CHRIST of his gentleness
Thirsting and hungering
Walked in the wilderness;
Soft words of grace He spoke
Unto lost desert-folk
That listened wondering.
He heard the bitterns call
From ruined palace-wall,
Answered them brotherly.
He held communion
With the she-pelican
Of lonely piety.
Basilisk, cockatrice,
Flocked to His homilies,
With mail of dread device,
With monstrous barbèd stings,
With eager dragon-eyes;
Great bats on leathern wings
And poor blind broken things,
Foul in their miseries.
And ever with Him went,
Of all His wanderings
Comrade, with ragged coat,
Gaunt ribs—poor innocent—
Bleeding foot, burning throat,
The guileless old scape-goat;
For forty nights and days
Followed in Jesus' ways,
Sure guard behind Him kept,
Tears like a lover wept.

1914.

A Boy in Church

"GABBLE-GABBLE, . . . brethren, . . . gabble-gabble!"

My window frames forest and heather.
I hardly hear the tuneful babble,
Not knowing nor much caring whether
The text is praise or exhortation,
Prayer or thanksgiving, or damnation.

Outside it blows wetter and wetter,
The tossing trees never stay still.
I shift my elbows to catch better
The full round sweep of heathered hill.
The tortured copse bends to and fro
In silence like a shadow-show.

The parson's voice runs like a river
Over smooth rocks. I like this church:
The pews are staid, they never shiver,
They never bend or sway or lurch.
"Prayer," says the kind voice, "is a chain
That draws down Grace from Heaven again."

I add the hymns up, over and over,
Until there's not the least mistake.
Seven-seventy-one. (Look! there's a plover!
It's gone!) Who's that Saint by the lake?
The red light from his mantle passes
Across the broad memorial brasses.

It's pleasant here for dreams and thinking,
Lolling and letting reason nod,
With ugly serious people linking
Sad prayers to a forgiving God. . . .
But a dumb blast sets the trees swaying
With furious zeal like madmen praying.

Escape

(August 6, 1916.—Officer previously reported died of wounds, now reported wounded : Graves, Captain R., Royal Welch Fusiliers.)

BUT I *was* dead, an hour or more.
I woke when I'd already passed the door
That Cerberus guards, and half-way down the road
To Lethe, as an old Greek signpost showed.
Above me, on my stretcher swinging by,
I saw new stars in the subterrene sky :
A Cross, a Rose in bloom, a Cage with bars,
And a barbed Arrow feathered in fine stars.
I felt the vapours of forgetfulness
Float in my nostrils. Oh, may Heaven bless
Dear Lady Proserpine, who saw me wake,
And, stooping over me, for Enna's sake
Cleared my poor buzzing head and sent me back
Breathless, with leaping heart along the track.
After me roared and clattered angry hosts
Of demons, heroes, and policeman-ghosts.
"Life! life! I can't be dead! I won't be dead!
Damned if I'll die for anyone!" I said. . . .

Cerberus stands and grins above me now,
Wearing three heads—lion, and lynx, and sow.
"Quick, a revolver! But my Webley's gone,
Stolen! . . . No bombs . . . no knife. . . . The crowd
 swarms on,
Bellows, hurls stones. . . . Not even a honeyed sop . . .
Nothing. . . . Good Cerberus! . . . Good dog! . . .
 but stop!

Stay! . . . A great luminous thought . . . I do believe
There's still some morphia that I bought on leave."
Then swiftly Cerberus' wide mouths I cram
With army biscuit smeared with ration jam;
And sleep lurks in the luscious plum and apple.
He crunches, swallows, stiffens, seems to grapple

With the all-powerful poppy . . . then a snore,
A crash; the beast blocks up the corridor
With monstrous hairy carcase, red and dun—
Too late! for I've sped through.
O Life! O Sun!

Vain and Careless

LADY, lovely lady,
Careless and gay!
Once when a beggar called
She gave her child away.

The beggar took the baby,
Wrapped it in a shawl,
"Bring her back," the lady said,
"Next time you call."

Hard by lived a vain man,
So vain and so proud,
He walked on stilts
To be seen by the crowd,

Up above the chimney pots,
Tall as a mast,
And all the people ran about
Shouting till he passed.

"A splendid match surely,"
Neighbours saw it plain,
"Although she is so careless,
Although he is so vain."

But the lady played bobcherry,
Did not see or care,
As the vain man went by her
Aloft in the air.

This gentle-born couple
Lived and died apart.
Water will not mix with oil
Nor vain with careless heart.

Pot and Kettle

COME close to me, dear Annie, while I bind a lover's
knot.

A tale of burning love between a kettle and a pot.
The pot was stalwart iron and the kettle trusty tin,
And though their sides were black with smoke they bubbled
love within.

Forget that kettle, Jamie, and that pot of boiling broth,
I know a dismal story of a candle and a moth,
For while your pot is boiling and while your kettle sings
My moth makes love to candle flame and burns away his
wings.

Your moth I envy, Annie, that died by candle flame,
But here are two more lovers, unto no damage came.
There was a cuckoo loved a clock and found her always
true.

For every hour they told their hearts, "Ring! ting!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

As the pot boiled for the kettle, as the kettle for the pot,
So boils my love within me till my breast is glowing hot,
As the moth died for the candle, so could I die for you,
And my fond heart beats time with yours and cries
"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Song : One Hard Look

SMALL gnats that fly
In hot July
And lodge in sleeping ears,
Can rouse therein
A trumpet's din
With Day-of-Judgment fears.

Small mice at night
Can wake more fright
Than lions at midday.
A straw will crack
The camel's back,
There is no easier way.

One smile relieves
A heart that grieves
Though deadly sad it be,
And one hard look
Can close the book
That lovers love to see.

Dicky

MOTHER :

OH, what a heavy sigh!
Dicky, are you ailing?

DICKY :

Even by this fireside, mother,
My heart is failing.

To-night across the down,
Whistling and jolly,
I sauntered out from town
With my stick of holly.

Bounteous and cool from sea
The wind was blowing,
Cloud shadows under the moon
Coming and going.

I sang old roaring songs,
Ran and leaped quick,
And turned home by St. Swithin's
Twirling my stick.

And there as I was passing
The churchyard gate
An old man stopped me, "Dicky,
You're walking late."

I did not know the man,
I grew afeared
At his lean lolling jaw,
His spreading beard,

His garments old and musty,
Of antique cut,
His body very lean and bony,
His eyes tight shut.

Oh, even to tell it now
My courage ebbs . . .
His face was clay, mother,
His beard, cobwebs.

In that long horrid pause
"Good-night," he said,
Entered and clicked the gate,
"Each to his bed."

MOTHER :

Do not sigh or fear, Dicky,
How is it right
To grudge the dead their ghostly dark
And wan moonlight?

We have the glorious sun,
Lamp and fireside.
Grudge not the dead their moon-beams
When abroad they ride.

Ghost Raddled

“COME, surly fellow, come! A song!”
What, madmen? Sing to you?
Choose from the clouded tales of wrong
And terror I bring to you.

Of a night so torn with cries,
Honest men sleeping
Start awake with glaring eyes,
Bone-chilled, flesh creeping.

Of spirits in the web-hung room
Up above the stable,
Groans, knockings in the gloom,
The dancing table.

Of demons in the dry well
That cheep and mutter,
Clanging of an unseen bell,
Blood choking the gutter.

Of lust frightful, past belief,
Lurking unforgotten,
Unrestrainable endless grief
From breasts long rotten.

A song? What laughter or what song
Can this house remember?
Do flowers and butterflies belong
To a blind December?

Allie

*ALLIE, call the birds in,
The birds from the sky.
Allie calls, Allie sings,
Down they all fly.
First there came
Two white doves
Then a sparrow from his nest,
Then a clucking bantam hen,
Then a robin red-breast.*

*Allie, call the beasts in,
The beasts, every one,
Allie calls, Allie sings,
In they all run.
First there came
Two black lambs,
Then a grunting Berkshire sow,
Then a dog without a tail,
Then a red and white cow.*

*Allie, call the fish up,
The fish from the stream.*
Allie calls, Allie sings,
Up they all swim.
First there came
Two gold fish,
A minnow and a miller's thumb,
Then a pair of spotted trout,
Then the twisting eels come.

*Allie, call the children,
Children from the green,*
Allie calls, Allie sings,
Soon they run in.
First there came
Tom and Madge,
Kate and I who'll not forget
How we played by the water's edge
Till the April sun set.

A Frosty Night

MOTHER :

A LICE, dear, what ails you,
Dazed and white and shaken?
Has the chill night numbed you?
Is it fright you have taken?

ALICE :

Mother, I am very well,
I felt never better,
Mother, do not hold me so,
Let me write my letter.

MOTHER :

Sweet, my dear, what ails you?

ALICE :

No, but I am well;
The night was cold and frosty,
There's no more to tell.

MOTHER :

Ay, the night was frosty,
Coldly gaped the moon,
Yet the birds seemed twittering
Through green boughs of June.

Soft and thick the snow lay,
Stars danced in the sky.
Not all the lambs of May-day
Skip so bold and high.

Your feet were dancing, Alice,
Seemed to dance on air,
You looked a ghost or angel
In the starlight there.

Your eyes were frosted starlight,
Your heart fire and snow.
Who was it said, "I love you"?

ALICE :

Mother, let me go!

Rocky Acres

THIS is a wild land, country of my choice,
With harsh craggy mountain, moor ample and bare.
Seldom in these acres is heard any voice

But voice of cold water that runs here and there
Through rocks and lank heather growing without care.
No mice in the heath run nor no birds cry
For fear of the dark speck that floats in the sky.

He soars and he hovers rocking on his wings,
He scans his wide parish with a sharp eye,
He catches the trembling of small hidden things,
He tears them in pieces, dropping from the sky :
Tenderness and pity the land will deny,
Where life is but nourished from water and rock
A hardy adventure, full of fear and shock.

Time has never journeyed to this lost land,
Crakeberries and heather bloom out of date,
The rocks jut, the streams flow singing on either hand,
Careless if the season be early or late,
The skies wander overhead, now blue, now slate :
Winter would be known by his cold cutting snow
If June did not borrow his armour also.

Yet this is my country beloved by me best,
The first land that rose from Chaos and the Flood,
Nursing no fat valleys for comfort and rest,
Trampled by no hard hooves, stained with no blood.
Bold immortal country whose hill tops have stood
Strongholds for the proud gods when on earth they go,
Terror for fat burghers in far plains below.

A Lover Since Childhood

TANGLED in thought am I,
Stumble in speech do I,
Do I blunder and blush for the reason why?
Wander aloof do I,
Lean over gates and sigh,
Making friends with the bee and the butterfly?

If thus and thus I do,
Dazed by the thought of you,
Walking my sorrowful way in the early dew,
My heart cut through and through
In this despair for you,
Starved for a word or a look will my hope renew;

Give then a thought for me
Walking so miserably,
Wanting relief in the friendship of flower or tree;
Do but remember, we
Once could in love agree,
Swallow your pride, let us be as we used to be.

A Crusader

DEATH, eager always to pretend
Himself my servant in the land of spears,
Humble allegiance at the end
Broke where the homeward track your castle nears,
Let his white steed before my red steed press
And rapt you from me into quietness.

The Ridge-Top

BELOW the ridge a raven flew
And we heard the lost curlew
Mourning out of sight below;
Mountain tops were touched with snow;
Even the long dividing plain
Showed no wealth of sheep or grain,
But fields of boulders lay like corn
And raven's croak was shepherd's horn
To slow cloud shadow strayed across
A pasture of thin heath and moss.
The North Wind rose; I saw him press
With lusty force against your dress,
Moulding your body's inward grace
And streaming off from your set face;
So now no longer flesh and blood,
But poised in marble thought you stood;
O wingless Victory, loved of men,
Who could withstand your triumph then?

Song of Contrariety

FAR away is close at hand,
Close joined is far away;
Love might come at your command
Yet will not stay.

At summons of your dream-despair
She could not disobey,
But slid close down beside you there
And complaisant lay.

Yet now her flesh and blood consent
In waking hours of day,
Joy and passion both are spent,
Fading clean away.

Is the presence empty air,
Is the spectre clay,
That Love, lent substance by despair,
Wanes, and leaves you lonely there
On the bridal day?

A Forced Music

OF Love he sang, full-hearted one.
But when the song was done,
The King demanded more,
Ay, and commanded more.
The boy found nothing for encore,
Words, melodies, none:
Ashamed the song's glad rise and plaintive fall
Had so charmed King and Queen and all.

He sang the same verse once again,
But urging less Love's pain,
With altered time and key
He showed variety,
Seemed to refresh the harmony
Of his only strain,
So still the glad rise and the plaintive fall
Could charm the King, the Queen, and all.

He of his song then wearying ceased,
But was not yet released;
The Queen's request was "More,"
And her behest was "More."
He played of random notes some score,
He found his rhymes at least—
Then suddenly let his twangling harp down fall
And fled in tears from King and Queen and all.

I Am the Star of Morning

I AM the star of morning poised between
The dead night and the coming of the sun,
Yet neither relic of the dark nor pointing
The angry day to come. My virtue is
My own, a mild light, an enduring peace,
And the remembering ancient tribe of birds
Sing blithest at my showing; only Man
Sleeps on and stirs rebellious in his sleep.
Lucifer, Lucifer, am I, millstone-crushed
Between conflicting powers of doubleness,
By envious Night lost in her myriad more
Counterfeit glints, in day-time quite overwhelmed
By tyrant blazing of the warrior sun.
Yet some, my prophets who at midnight hold me
Fixedly framed in their observant glass,
By daylight also, sinking well shafts deep
For water and for coolness of pure thought,
Gaze up and far above them see me shining
Me, single natured, without gender, one
The only spark of Godhead unresolved.

The North Window

WHEN the chapel is lit and sonorous with plough-
men's praise,
When matron and child crouch low to the Lord of Days,
When the windows are shields of greyness all about,
For the glowing lamps within and the storm without;
On this Eve of All Souls (suicides, too, have souls)
The damned to the Northward rise from their tablets and
scrolls,
With infants unbaptised that lie without ease,
With women betrayed, their mothers, who murdered these.

They make them a furious chapel of wind and gloom,
With Southward, one stained window, *The Hour of*
Doom,
Lit up by the lamp of the righteous beaming through,
With the scene reversed, and the legend backwards too,
Displaying in scarlet and gold the Creator Who damns,
Who has thrust on His Left the bleating sheep and the
lambs,
Who has fix't on His Right the goats and kids accursed,
With *Omega: Alpha* restoring the last as first :
Then the psalms to God that issue hence or thence
Ring blasphemy each to the other's Omnipotence.

The Rainbow and the Sceptic

“**D**ECREES of God? Of One Prime
Cause?

Predestinate for men,
Whose only knowledge of such laws
Is change and change again?

“Made free or fated, what care I
In truth's grand overthrow?
Since knowledge is but folly's spy
It is not sane to know.

“For Fate's a word of trivial sense
And Freedom is knocked blind,
If there is nowhere permanence,
If God can change His mind.”

Disconsolate and strange enough
He walked the forest side,
The sun blazed out, the shower drew off,
The rainbow straddled wide.

It stained with red the chalky road,
It leapt from sea to hill;
A second arch more faintly showed,
A third arch faintlier still.

The black blaspheming furious mood
Passed from him gradually:
Wry-mouthed in cynic pause he stood
And smiled "The Golden Key."

"The elf-key at the rainbow's rise:
Watch it and walk with care!
It vanishes beneath your eyes,
It passes on elsewhere."

"So laws like rainbows move and mock,
So wisdom never brings
The airy treasure to unlock
The essential heart of things" . . .

A spirit of air in answer spoke
With strange and solemn sense:
Music and light about him broke
In seven-toned effluence.

"Man, Man, accept this new degree
Of beauty as you go;
Observe the march of what must be,
The bend of each new bow."

"Then since laws move in rainbow-light
Let faith be therefore strong,
That change can never prove you right,
Nor either prove you wrong."

"Shall Time-the-present judge Time-past
Once blotted from its view?
Each key must vary from the last,
Because each lock springs new."

“Knowledge of changing lock and key,
So much the FINITE is;
Let the bow beckon ‘Follow me,
Whose hopes are certainties;’”

“Yet beyond all this, rest content
In dumbness to revere
INFINITE God without event,
Causeless, not there, not here,”

“Neither eternal nor time-bound,
Not certain, nor in change,
Uncancelled by the cosmic round,
Nor crushed within its range.”

Diplomatic Relations

KING GEORGE still powder-grimed from Dettingen
Called in thick tones, “My Lord, fetch ink and pen!
I’ll write a threatening note in my own hand.
This Chinese Potentate must understand
That Britons have a quenchless fame to brag.
No insult shall defile our glorious flag.
Two Bristol ships at Hankow fetching tea,
Boarded and robbed at wharfside as they lay
Of a costly cargo! Ha, Sir! Let me boast,
My Fleet stands ready to bombard your coast.
If meek apologies be not forthcoming
My fusiliers must through Peking go drumming.
You shall eat dust, d’ye hear, you knavish fellow,
Or we shall tan your hide a deeper yellow.
Ten ships shall yearly visit your chief ports
With mirrors, beads, and clothing of all sorts

Carrying Decorum to your savage parts
 With Civilization, Learning and the Arts.
 But if so much as a rattle's robbed or broke,
 Your Chinese Territory flies up in smoke.
 You, then, beware. Signed, GEORGIUS REX. So, So.
 Our Foreign Minister sends this. Take it, go!"
 The Foreign Minister, reading the piece through,
 Swore by his wig, why, this would never do.
 "Our Sovereign trips on all the finer points
 Of English speech, confuses, blurs, disjoins.
 To send this note, 's blood, it were most unwise.
 Suppose it intercepted by French spies!
 'L'anglais du Roi . . .' I hear their mocking tone,
 'Dunce-cap instead of crown, dunce-stool for throne?'
 Why, even in China, men would laugh to read
 This halting odd misspelt improbable screech.
 But stay! Our Sovereign we would surely please,
 Translating him his Note into Chinese.
 Li-Chung will do't, then there can be no call
 To pawn our honour with the original."
 Li-Chung, the Bondstreet tea-man with meek eyes,
 Performed the service, showing no surprise
 Though inwardly enraged and jealous for
 The sacred majesty of his Emperor . . .
 How faithful his translation, who can say?
 George signed it merrily, and it reached Cathay.

The Emperor from his Summer terraces
 Claps hands for ink and sable paint-brushes,
 And writes with care a special declaration
 To the Loyal Governor of the British Nation,
 Commiserating with that luckless one,
 By seas exiled from his Imperial Sun
 On such out-cast and pariah-like condition.
 "We note the abject tone of your petition
 And sorry excuses for your impudence
 In thus soliciting our Magnificence.

Then, though we cannot in the atlas hit on
 A Chinese province or sub-province *Britain*,
 We graciously will, none the less, allow
 Ten yearly junks to harbour at Hankow,
 With skins, blubber, oil, or such-like pelting stuff—
 Indeed, five junk-loads would be quite enough.
 Formal permission, signed, 'YOUR GOD.' So, So.
 Our Foreign Minister sends this. Take it! Go!"
 The Foreign Minister, reading the piece through,
 Swore by his pigtail, this would never do.
 "Our Emperor neglects the niceties,
 Indeed, the major rules of Court Chinese,
 Our iron-helmed Manchu God in battle's shock,
 Or warrior council, sits as firm as rock,
 But as for drafting edict, Note or letter,
 My six-year-old could do as well, aye, better.
 Can I permit my Sovereign's reputation
 To sink even in a heathen's estimation?
 I'll tactfully propose it more correct
 To send this note in British dialect.
 Ned Gunn, the boxing teacher at Nanking,
 Will soon translate the odd, fantastic thing."
 Ned Gunn, a stolid sailor with bold eyes,
 Performed the service showing no surprise,
 Though, loyal to the death, he felt his gorge
 Mount at this insult to victorious George.
 His English version which he owned was free
 The Emperor signed, frowned, sent it oversea.

George read the note, puffed out his cheeks, began—
 "He takes his medicine like a sensible man,
 Apologises humbly, swears to behave
 With fawning loyalty of dog or slave,
 Sadly admits his colour far from white,
 And trusts this missive is not impolite,
 Longs for our British cargoes rich and strange,
 Has only trash to offer in exchange,

‘ May your Red, White and Blue still rule the main
And countless Dettingens be fought again!
God save the King! Kow Tow! Success to barter.’”
George swore, “We must reward him with the Garter.”

Alice

WHEN that prime heroine of our nation, Alice,
Climbing courageously in through the Palace
Of Looking Glass, found it inhabited
By chessboard personages, white and red,
Involved in never-ending tournament,
She being of true philosophic bent,
Had long foreshadowed something of this kind,
Asking herself, “Suppose I stood behind
And viewed the fireplace of Their drawing room
From hearthrug level, why must I assume
That what I see now must needs correspond
With what I saw then? And the rooms beyond,
Why should they pair with our rooms?”

She was right.

An earlier Einstein whom the Laws of Light
And Euclid’s beg-the-question fallacies
Could not convince: a master-mind was Alice’s;
Moreover, discontent with what she had done,
Alice decided to enlarge her fun,
Setting herself with proper British phlegm
And simple faith in simple stratagem
To learn the rules and moves and perfect them.
So prosperously there she settled down
That six moves only and she’d won her crown,
A triumph surely; but her greater feat
Was rounding these adventures off complete,
Accepting them, when safe returned again,

As queer but true, not merely in the main
True, but as true as anything you'd swear to,
Not worse or better than the life we are heir to,
The waking life which, but I can't say why,
We worship as the sole Reality;
For Alice though a child could understand
That neither did this chance-discovered land
Make nohow or contrariwise the clean
Dull round of mid-Victorian routine,
Nor did Victoria's golden rule extend
Beyond the glass: it came to the dead end
Where formal logic also comes; thereafter
Begins that lubberland of dream and laughter,
The red and white flower spangled hedge, the grass
Where Apuleius pastured his Gold Ass,
Where young Gargantua made full holiday;
But further from our heroine not to stray,
Let us observe with what uncommon sense,
Though a secure and easy reference
Between Red Queen and kitten could be found,
She made no false assumption on that ground
(A trap in which the scientist would fall),
That queens and kittens are identical.

The Presence

WHY say Death? for Death's neither harsh nor
kind:
Other pleasures or pains could hold the mind
If she were dead; for dead is gone indeed,
Lost beyond recovery and need,
Discarded, ended, rotted underground;
Of whom no personal feature could be found
To stand out from the soft blur evenly spread
On memory; if she were truly dead.

But living still, barred from accustomed use
Of body and dress and motion, in abuse
Of loving-kindness (for our anguish too
Denies we love her as we swear we do),
She fills the house and garden terribly
With her bewilderment, accusingly
Enforcing her too sharp identity,
Till every stone and flower, bottle and book,
Cries out her name, pierces us with her look,
“You are deaf, hear me!
You are blind, see me!”

How deaf or blind,
When horror unrelieved maddens the mind
With those same pangs that lately choked her breath
And changed her substance, but have brought no death?

From Our Ghostly Enemy

THE fire was already white ash
When the lamp went out,
And the clock at that signal stopped:
The man in the chair held his breath
As if Death were about.

The moon shone bright as a lily
On his books outspread.
He could read in that lily light:
“When you have endured your fill,
Kill!” the book read.

The print being small for his eyes,
To ease their strain
A hasty candle he lit,
Keeping the page with his thumb.
“Come, those words again!”

But the book he held in his hand
And the page he held
Spelt prayers for the sick and needy,
“By God, they are wanted here,”
With fear his heart swelled.

“I know of an attic ghost,
Of a cellar ghost,
And of one that stalks in the meadows,
But here’s the spirit I dread,”
He said, “the most;

“Who, without voice or body,
Distresses me much,
Twists the ill to holy, holy to ill,
Confuses me, out of reach
Of speech or touch;

“Who works by moon or by noon,
Threatening my life.
I am sick and needy indeed.”
He went then filled with despairs
Upstairs to his wife.

He told her those things, adding
“This morning alone,
Writing, I felt for a match-box:
It rose up into my hand,
Understand, on its own.

“In the garden yesterday
As I walked by the beds,
With the tail of my eye I caught
‘Death within twelve hours’
Written in flowers’ heads.”

She answered him, simple advice
But new, he thought, and true.
“Husband, of this be sure,
That whom you fear the most,
This ghost fears you.

“Speak to the ghost and tell him,
‘Whoever you be,
Ghost, my anguish equals yours,
Let our cruelties therefore end.
Your friend let me be.’”

He spoke, and the ghost, who knew not
How he plagued that man,
Ceased, and the lamp was lit again,
And the dumb clock ticked again,
And the reign of peace began.

1924.

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